(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which this tribunal is likely to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (c) Customs, Excise and Gold (Control) Appellate Tribunal (CEGAT) is already an existing Tribunal constituted under the Finance Act, 1980 for hearing appeals against the orders of Commissioner (Appeals) in Customs/Excise matters. Proposals for constitution of a National Tribunal for Customs and Excise, in the light of the recommendations of the Law Commission in its 115th Report, can be considered only after an indepth study of the existing Tribunals is made by the Law Commission, in the light of the observations made by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of Shri L. Chandra Kumar Vs Union of India (CA 481/89).

[English]

Judicial Action Against Companies

1702. SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the departmental and judicial action is being taken against some companies for the evasion of excise and customs duties involving an amount of more than one million thousand of rupees;

(b) if so, the details of such companies, State-wise and particularly in Uttar Pradesh;

(c) the companies against whom such cases are pending for more than three years in Central Excise Gold Control Appellate Tribunal, High Courts and Supreme Court, as on date; and

(d) the effective steps being taken or proposed to be taken by the Government for immediate recovery of amount?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Forged Drafts of Foreigners

1703. LT. GENL. PRAKASH MANI TRIPATHI :

SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA :

SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL :

SHRI CHANDRA BHUSHAN SINGH :

Willl the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item appearing in the 'Hindustan Times' dated June 23, 1997 captioned "Lakhs withdrawn through forged drafts";

(b) the facts of the matter reported thereon;

(c) the *modus operandi* of the withdrawal through forged drafts;

(d) the reasons for which the banks concerned in India could not detect the criminal conspiracy by some foreigners at the time of encashment of these forged drafts; and

(e) the effective measures being taken by the Reserve Bank of India to prevent such heavy amounts being withdrawn through forged drafts by unscrupulous persons and plugging the lacunae in the existing procedure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (e) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Diversion of Funds

1704. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN :

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Union Government has been drawn to the alleged diversion of Central Government funds for development schemes in West Bengal to unauthorised Personal Ledger Accounts (PLAs) for the last five/six years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Union Government have enquired into the matter;

(d) if so, the findings thereof; and

(e) the measures/action taken or proposed to be taken to check recurrence of such cases in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) Some complaints have been received in regard to financial irregularities in the State of West Bengal including that of alleged diversion of Central Government funds for development schemes in West Bengal to unauthorised Personal Ledger Accounts (PLA's).

Audit Report of Union Government for the period ending 31st March, 1996 on performance Reviews on selected centrally sponsored schemes which was presented in Parliament on 8th may, 1997 incorporates some points relating to procedural irregularities including diversion of Central funds and its deposit in non interest bearing Personal Ledger Account, misutilisation and non utilisation of funds, ineffective monitoring and evaluation etc. in respect of a number of States including West Bengal.

(c) to (e) The funds for centrally sponsored schemes are released by different central Ministries who administer these schemes. As per the procedure, the concerned Ministries are required to respond to the points highlighted in the Audit Report. Reply of these Ministries on the irregularities pointed out in the report, duly vetted by "Audit" will be placed before the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament.

Gold

1705. SHRI N.S. V. CHITTHAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the total indigenous production of gold along with its value in the country during each of the last three years;

(b) the total consumption of gold in the country during the said period;

(c) the total import and export of gold and gold Jewellery during the said period; and

(d) the total quantity of gold confiscated during the said period alongwith its value?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) The total indigenous production of gold in India during the last three years is indicated below.

(Year)	Gold Production (in Kgs)
1994-95	2369
1995-96	2036
1996-97	2904

(b) The gold imported into the country and the indigenous production of gold in India may be considered as a rough estimate of total consumption of gold in the country. The details are furnished in reply to part (a) & (c) of the question.

(c) The total import of gold and gold jewellery into India is as follow :

Year	Legal Import (in Tonnes)
1994	205
1995	278
1996	324

The value of total export of gold jewellery during the last three financial years is as follows:-

Year	Value (in US $ million)
1994-95	421.20
1995-96	480.40
1996-97	511.80

(d) the details of gold confiscated during the last three years is as follows:-

Year	Value of Gold confiscated (Rs. in crores)
1995-96	35.90
1996-97	44.50
1997-98 (up to May 97)	6.01

Foreign Exchange Dealers

1706. SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA :

SHRI SYDAIAH KOTA :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has recently been discovered that some licenced dealers in foreign exchange have withdrawn crores of rupees on forged documents;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the modus operendi of committing the fraud;

(c) whether the role of some Reserve Bank of India officials is also suspected in this matter; and

(d) the action taken by the Government against the offenders?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Enforcement Directorate has taken up investigations relating to withdrawal of foreign exchange by some money changers/ authorised dealers suspectedly against forged documents. Adjudication proceedings have been initiated in five cases.

(c) and (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Cess on Export of Spices

1707. PROF. P.J. KURIEN : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have imposed any cess on export of spices;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there have been representations from exporters to remove this cess; and

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (d) Presently, cess on export of specified spices is collected under the porvisions of the following Acts:-